REMARKS

General Remarks

The present amendment is intended to be fully responsive to all points of rejection raised by the Examiner in the Official Action mailed on February 16, 2006. The amendments herein are believed to place the application in condition for allowance.

Claims 1 – 8 and 34 – 38 are pending in the application.

Claim 1 and 3 are currently amended as shown above. Support for this amendment appears inter alia in Figs. 30A - 30C, 32A and 32B and in the written description throughout the discussion of Figs. 30A - 30C, 32A and 32B at pages 75 - 78.

The new limitations added to the independent claims clearly distinguish the present invention over the cited prior art to Tokita, which shows arrows indicating a gradient, but not vectors which extend along a boundary as taught by the present invention and claimed in the amended claims. Tokita's gradient arrows would normally be transverse to or even perpendicular to the boundary, as distinguished from the reference vectors of the claimed invention, which extend along the boundary.

No new matter has been added.

Favorable reconsideration and allowance of all claims under consideration is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

The allowance of claims 34 - 38 and the indication of claims 5, 6 and 8 as including allowable subject matter is acknowledged with appreciation.

Claims Rejections

Claims 1, 3, 4 and 7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent 4,958,374 et al. to Tokita.

Claim 2 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tokita.

Tokita describes a method of checking patterns and apparatus therefore in which a pattern is imaged, and the image is converted into a check image data that is represented by pixel data and density data. Design data is also converted into reference image data corresponding to the check image data. Check image data and reference image data are vectorized and compared to detect defects.

Claim 1, as amended includes, *inter alia*, the following distinguishing recitation:

"... creating a reference image for a representative object, said reference image comprising an at least partially vectorized first representation of boundaries representing said representative object, said at least partially vectorized first representation of boundaries comprising reference vectors extending along said boundaries"

There is nothing in Tokita that shows or suggests a "said at least partially vectorized first representation of boundaries comprising reference vectors extending along said boundaries". Although the Tokita reference image data includes vectors, those vectors would normally be transverse to or even perpendicular to the boundary, as distinguished from the reference vectors of the claimed invention, which extend along the boundary.

Claim 3 includes, *inter alia*, the following distinguishing recitation:

"... a boundary identifier operative to generate a representation of boundaries of known elements in an image, said representation of boundaries comprising reference vectors extending along said boundaries"
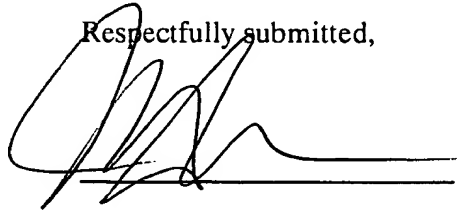
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As mentioned above, there is nothing in Tokita that shows or suggests "said representation of boundaries comprising reference vectors extending along said boundaries".

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that Tokita fails to anticipate independent claims 1 and 3. The Examiner is thus respectfully requested to withdraw rejection of these claims, and to withdraw the rejection of claim 2 which is patentable by virtue of its dependency from claim 1, and to withdraw the rejection of claims 4 and 7 which are patentable by virtue of their dependency from claim 3.

Conclusion and Request for Interview

In view of the foregoing, this application is believed to be in order. Reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

JULIAN H. COHEN
LADAS & PARRY
26 WEST 61ST STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10023
REG.NO.20,302(212)708-1887

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